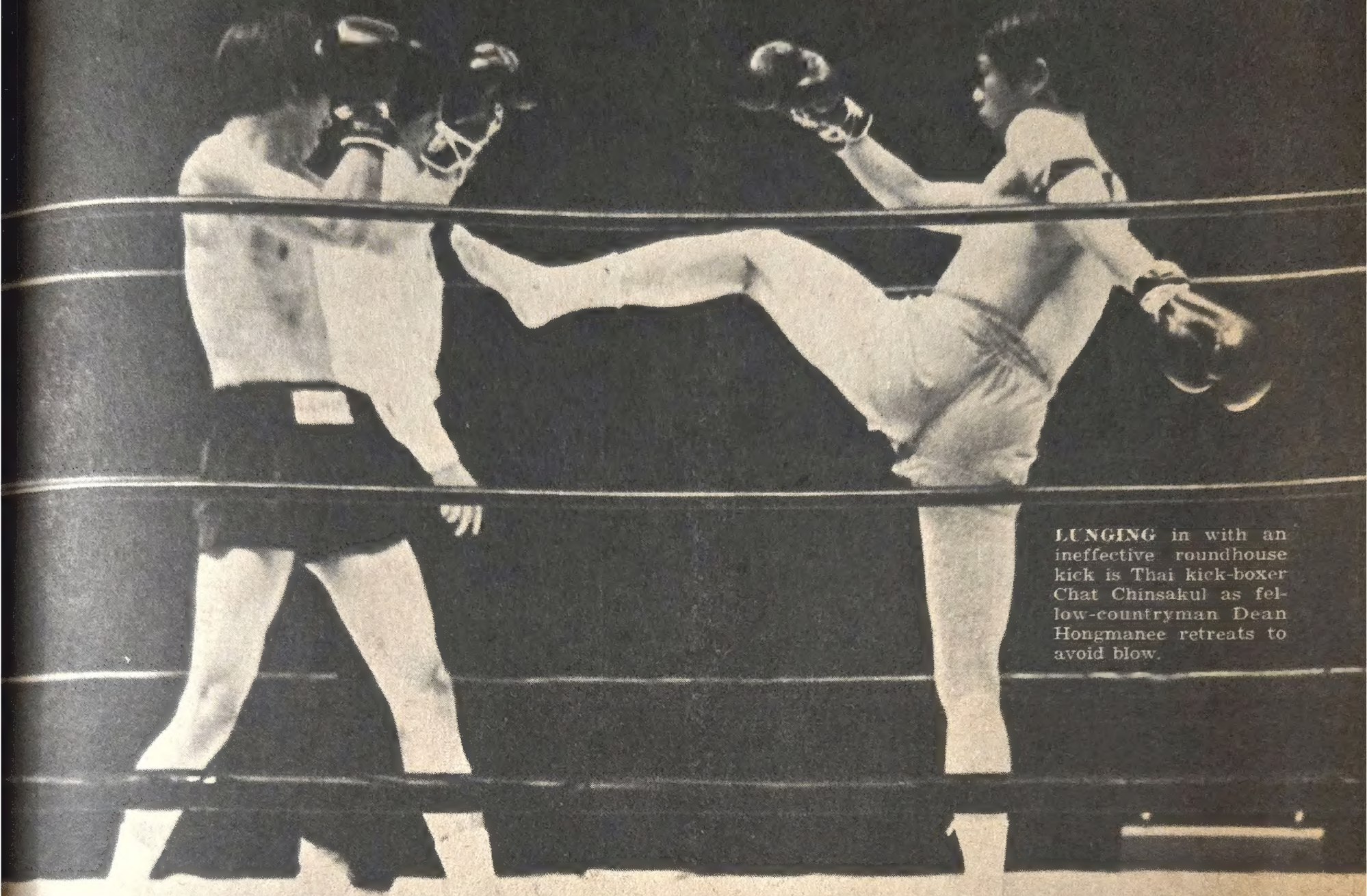
Kenpo, karate and kung-fu practitioners clashed together with Thai kick-boxers to try to resolve the question of whether karate is really as deadly as it appears? The 1970 All-American Kung-fu Karate Championships features as its main event . . .

KUNG-FU versus KICK-BOXING



LUNGING in with an ineffective roundhouse kick is Thai kick-boxer Chat Chinsakul as fellow-countryman Dean Hongmanee retreats to avoid blow.

BY DAVID COX

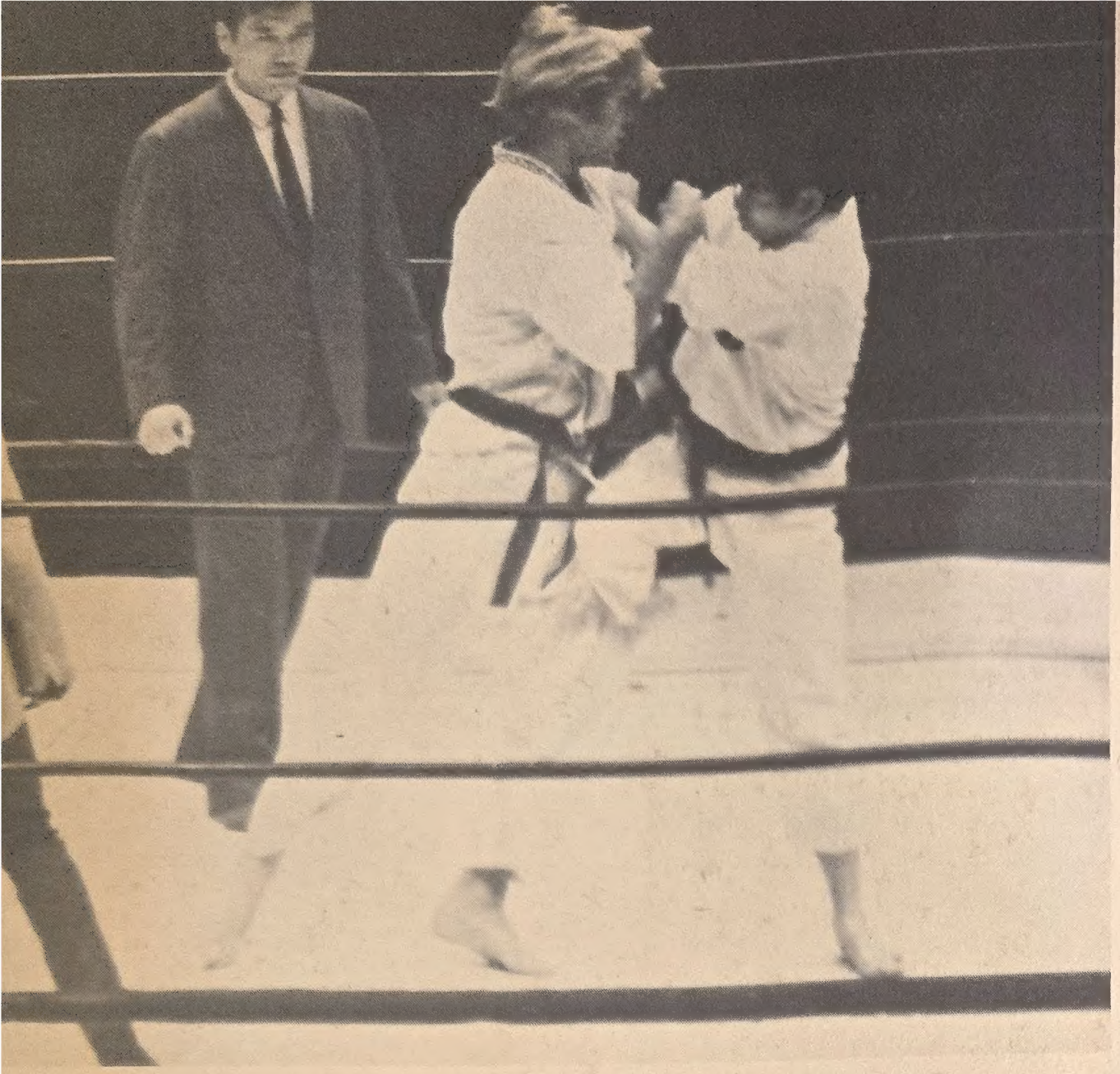
PHOTOS BY BARRY HAY

THERE HAVE BEEN MANY CLAIMS as to the so-called deadliness of both the arts of karate and kung-fu. These assumptions have been generally accepted by practitioners and laymen alike. However, when these arts were applied in a realistic set of circumstances, their effectiveness was sadly lacking, not only in punching and kicking, but also in blocking as well.

Unlike tournaments that have been held in the past, the 1970 All-America Kung-Fu Karate Championships featured both no-contact and full-contact matches. Held in San Francisco's Civic Auditorium, the matches involved mostly local kenpo and kung-fu stylists. One of the main attractions of the evening, however, was a three-round bout between two authentic Thailand kick-boxers, and the meet, sponsored by H. K. Chu of the Far East Self-Defense School in Redwood City, California, came to an exciting conclusion as a Thai kick-boxer battled with a local Chinese kung-fu stylist in a full-contact bout.

The evening began with a series of no-contact bouts on white, brown, and black belt levels. A one-point "sudden death" system was maintained during all of these matches. Whoever scored the first point was awarded the match and became eligible for the final eliminations in his respective belt division. There was a total of five matches for each belt division, which in turn was immediately followed by the final eliminations.

At the beginning of each match the contestants were thoroughly "frisked" by the referee. The purpose behind all of this was not made known to the spectators, who were more than amused by the whole charade. Some of the players wore



JAMMING and exchanging blows are two unidentified karateka in no-contact portion of tourney. Ironically, the only knockout of the meet occurred in the no-contact section.

sneakers while the others remained barefoot in the traditional fashion. During the course of the eliminations, there were several moments of indecision in regards to the awarding of points by the referee and two judges, all of whom were inside the ring with the contestants.

'No-Contact' Knock Out

A rather ironic point to note was that the only knockout made during the entire evening was in a match in the "no-contact" portion of the tournament. This took place in the fifth and final match of the black belt division which saw Steve Au against Ramiro Long. During an exchange of fluttering hand techniques, Au landed a blow to Long's left eye, knocking him dazed to the mat. Consequently, Au was disqualified for lack of control and Long was awarded the match. The decision, which was not readily explained, drew a barrage of boos and cat-calls from the audience who assumed that this was a contact bout.

The second portion of the tourney featured contact matches between contestants from both kung-fu and kenpo styles. The matches were divided into weight divisions rather than belt classifications. All of the competitors were outfitted with boxing gloves and nearly all wore either sneakers or kung-fu type shoes. The matches lasted a total of three rounds, each three minutes long, with one minute of rest in between.

It was quite obvious that most of the players were unaccustomed to fighting with gloves on and also striking to make full contact against a moving target. In most cases at the end of the first round the players were breathing heavily and showed none of the sharp, agile moves which are usually prevalent in the popular no-contact sparring matches.

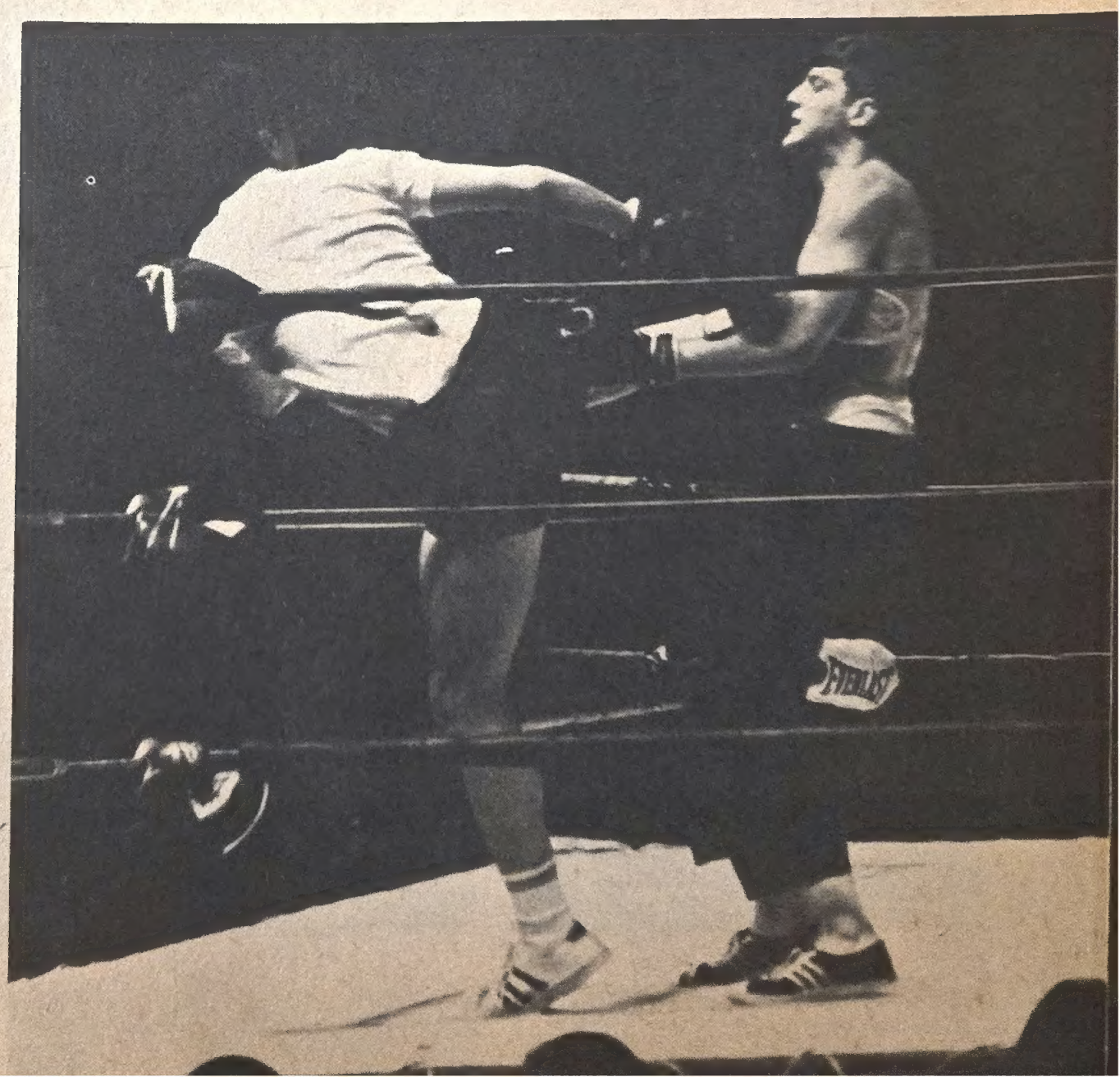
As the bouts progressed, the competitors waded in predominately using hand techniques, most of which appeared more to be like Sunday punches rather than sharply executed karate or kung-fu strikes. Little use was made of any kind of kicking techniques but the most common kick was the roundhouse, although it seemed to have slight effect when delivered. Furthermore, there were very few instances when the players used any of the basic karate or kung-fu postures, movements, etc., let alone the hand and foot techniques of this style.

During a clinch, the most common reaction was the use of the knees to the opponent's mid-section. However, these were not broken by the referee, even after a reasonable length of time. Instead, the matches were not stopped until either one or both of the combatants had finally fallen to the floor.

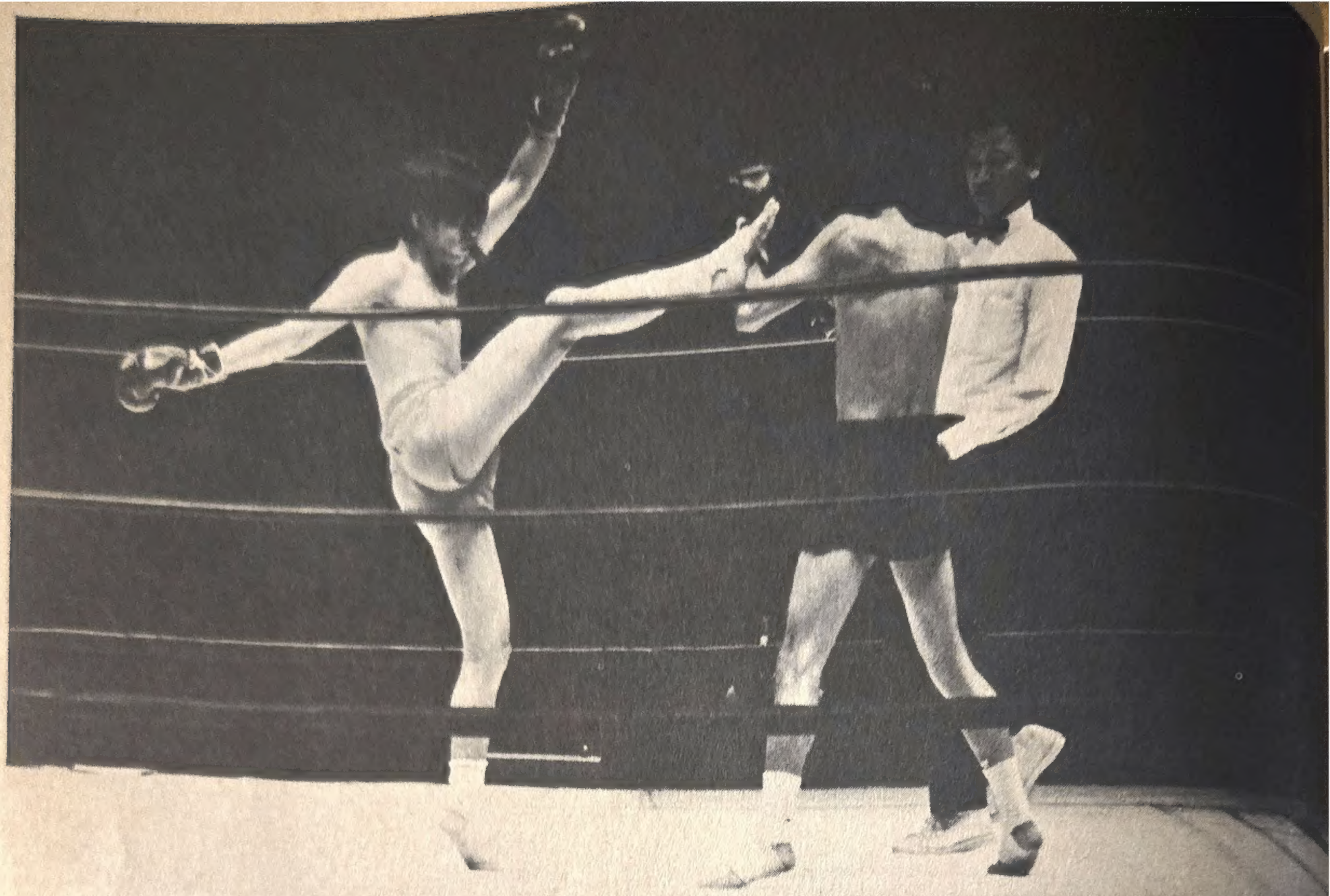
Thailand Kick-Boxers Make Debut

After the first two bouts of contact sparring were completed, the Thailand boxers, Dean Hongmanee and Chat Chinsakul, made their debut. Before the bout actually got underway, the fighters performed a ritual dance accompanied by a recording of traditional music as a prelude. According to the announcer, the significance of this ritual was to honor their boxing instructors and ancestors. As one player knelt in the center of the

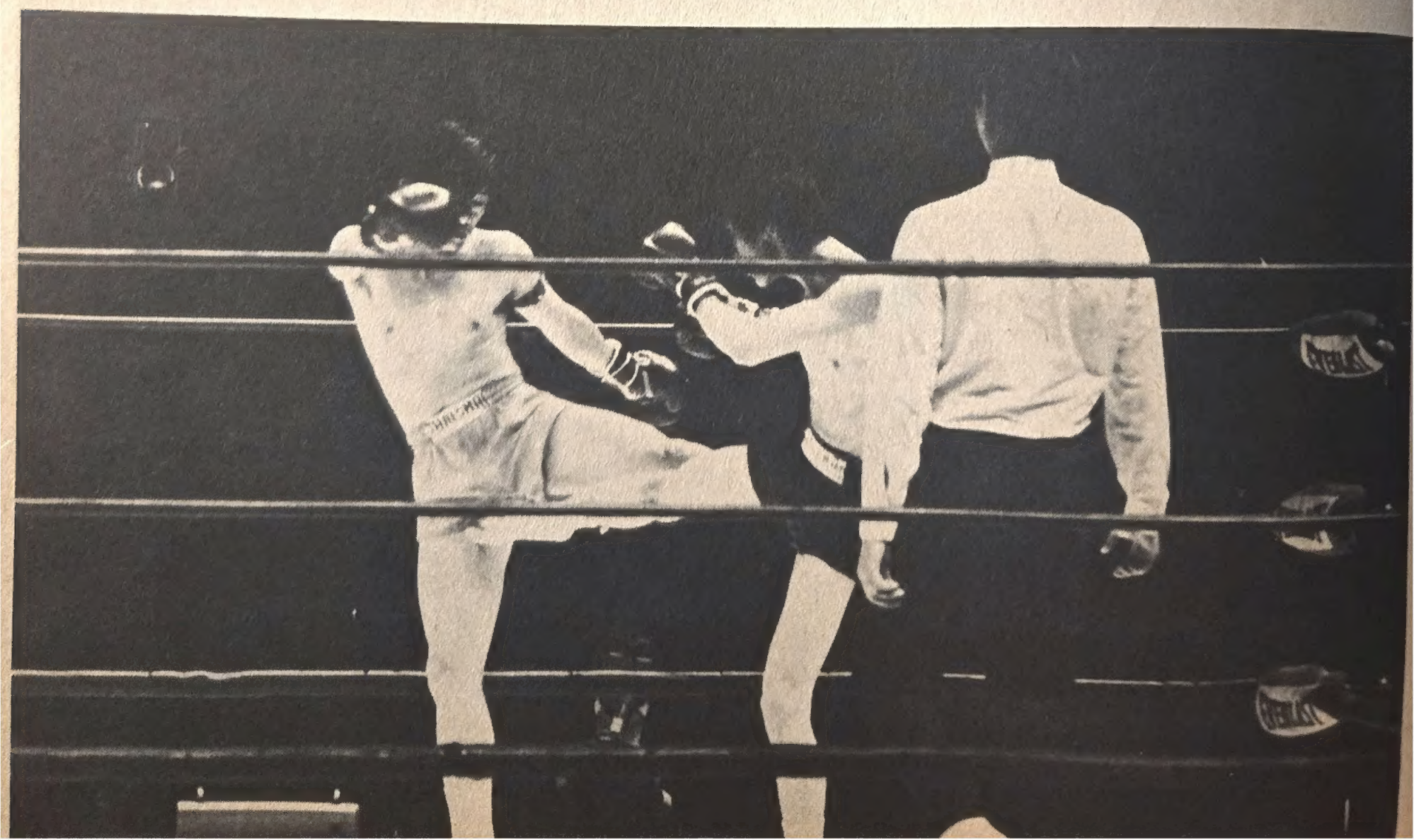
BLOW-FOR-BLOW exchange was one of the highlights of the Greg Deets versus Greg Pettus (at left) bout, which featured full-contact sparring with vigor and enthusiasm.

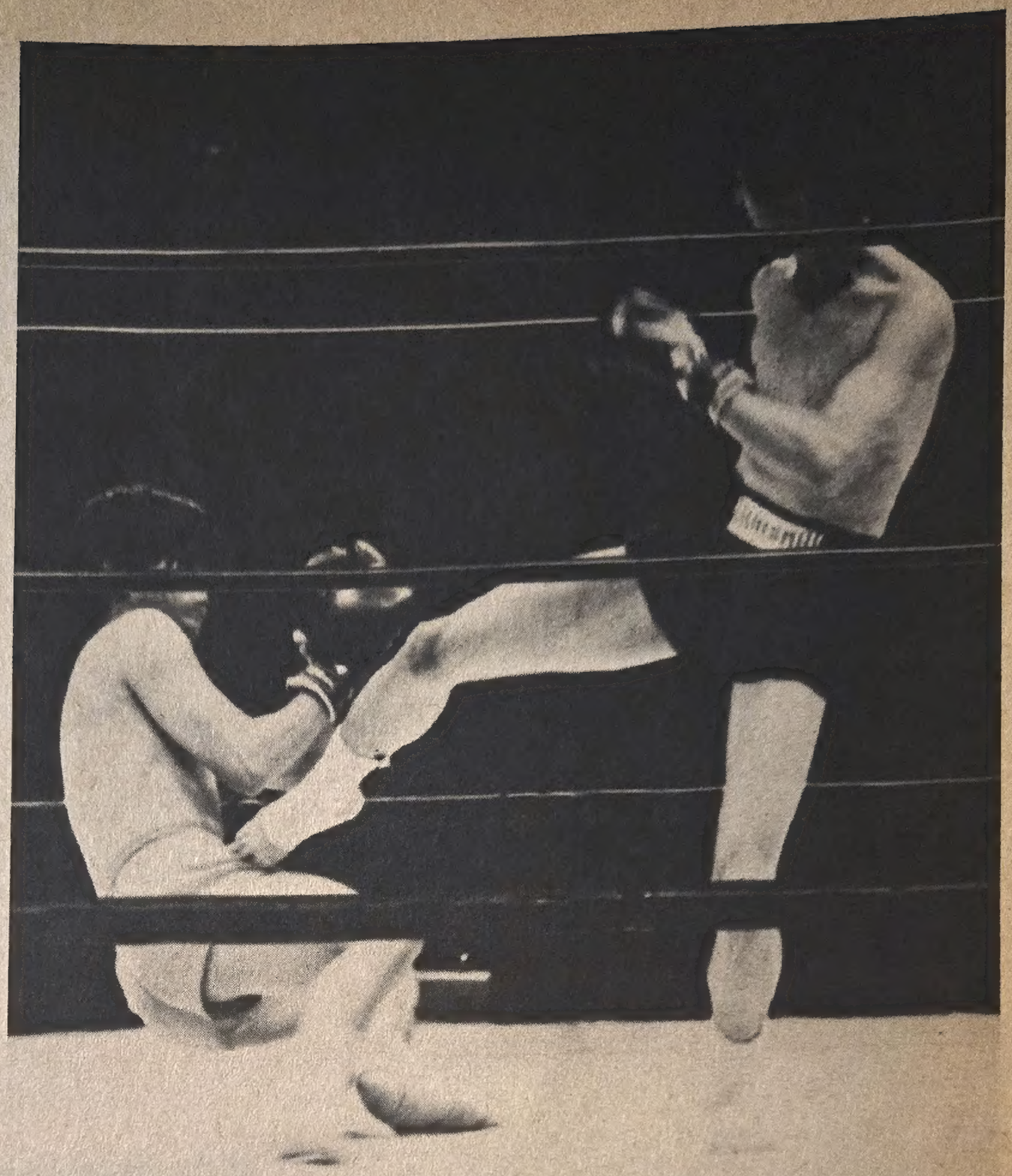


FULL POWER to his side, Pettus takes a roundhouse from Deets, then tries to tie up his opponent's leg while he counters his adversary against the ropes. More aggressive, Deets wins.



ENTERING for featured event are three Thais—two boxers and an official. Although there was no knockout, Thai kick-boxers proceeded to give a dynamic display of their homeland's art. In background, Thai instruments played music in time with fighters. Chat Chinsakul, at left in light trunks, scores and is retrieving his foot from Dean Hongmanee's attempted block. Below, they trade kicks.





DOWNING Chinsakul, Hongmanee follows-up with a low roundhouse. Dean scored on Chat with furious one-two hand combination that decked Thai boxer.

mat, the other would walk listlessly around the ring, pausing at each of the four corners before moving on to the next. Both fighters seemed to be engrossed in a form of meditation or spiritual preparation.

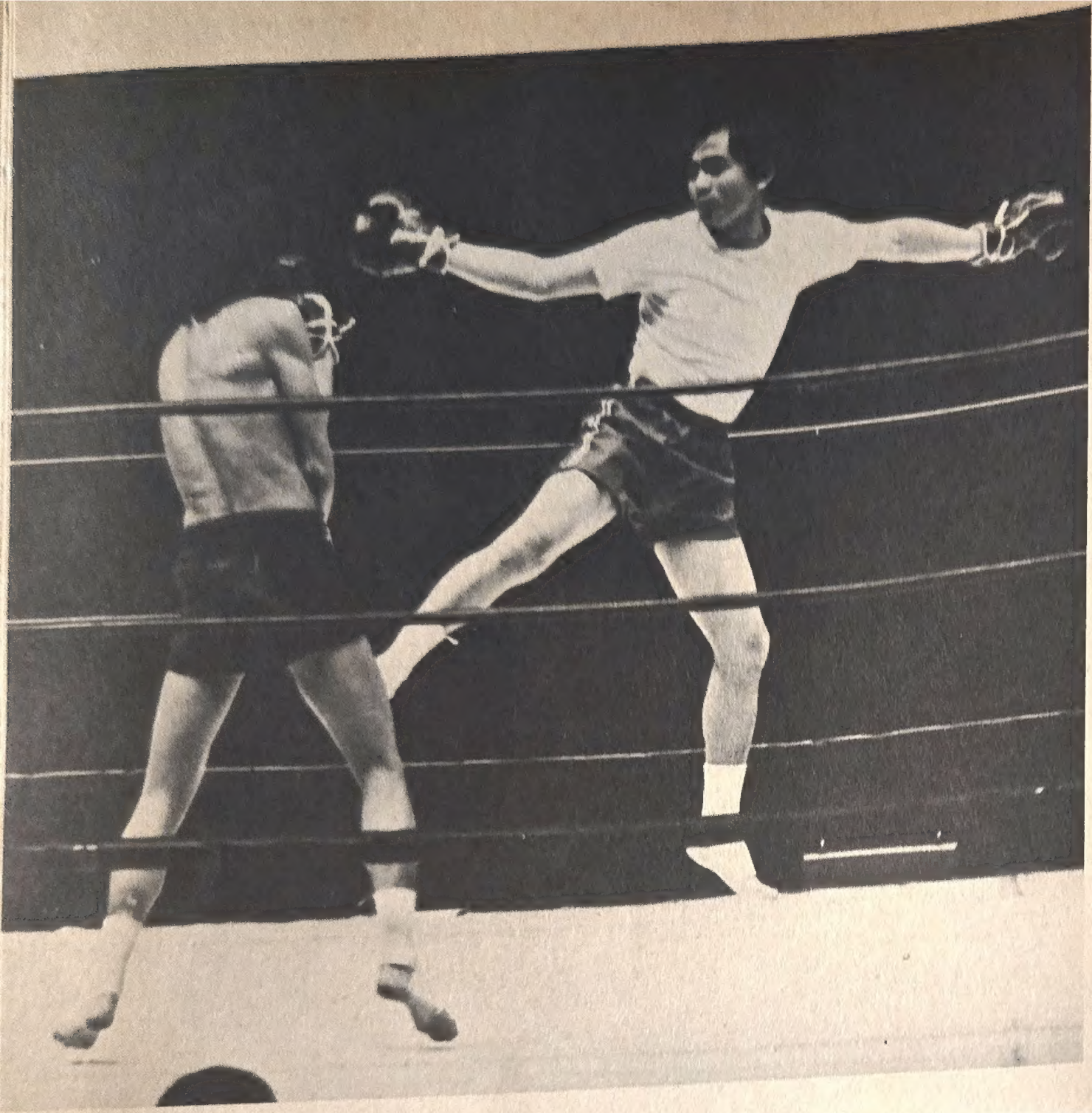
From the very beginning the match was brisk and action-packed. The boxers attacked and counterattacked each other relentlessly. A Thai referee calmly supervised the bout, breaking the clinches and returning the fighters to their respective corners when one or the other was downed. The most widely used techniques were the roundhouse kick (mostly to the head) and a left jab followed occasionally by a combination of both hands and feet. Throughout the entire bout the traditional Thai music accompanied the fighters as they moved fluidly about the ring.

At the conclusion of the third round the referee declared Dean Hongmanee the winner. The boxers bowed to each other, showed their respects to the referee and the fighting area, and made their exit.

Following the kick-boxing exhibition, the contact sparring matches were resumed. They were of basically the same calibre mentioned previously, with the exception of the match between Greg Deets and Greg Pettus. From the very beginning these younger players showed a great deal of vigor and enthusiasm. During the three rounds that the match lasted there was hardly a moment when one or the other wasn't either attacking or counter-attacking. Deets was finally declared the victor in the third round with a TKO over Pettus. Pettus had been downed several times and sustained a bloody nose during the second round of fighting.

Thai Kick-Boxing vs. Kung-Fu

A final match pitted Thay Prasert, a Thai kick-boxer, against Chong Orgard, a local kung-fu practitioner. From the onset the Thai kick-boxer literally swarmed over his opponent. The kung-fu man tried to counterattack the Thai, but his kicks and hand techniques were virtually ineffective as the kick-boxer pressed onward. The bout was finally stopped in the third round after the kung-fu man had been floored several times and was unable to continue. The Thai was awarded the victory with a TKO.



KUNG-FU versus Thai kick-boxing event shows kung-fu man, Chong Orgard almost spread-eagled in the air after an attempted attack in the final bout of the evening. Below, kick-boxer Thay Prasert ties up kung-fu man, in white T-shirt, after a punch-kick combination.

There were several injuries sustained at this tournament, although nothing of a critical nature. One player was unable to compete in a final bout because of an ear injury, and there were also numerous cases of cut lips and blackened eyes. Nevertheless, it was not until the tournament was concluded that it became apparent there was no evidence of a medical doctor on the scene. There has always been a physician present at every no-contact tournament in the past, but the tournament officials here were unable to offer any kind of explanation for the absence of a doctor.

Thus the kick-boxing event at San Francisco's Civic Auditorium came to an end. Despite the various styles represented, whether they were karate or kung-fu, all of the contestants punched, kicked, and moved basically the same way. The use of instinctive reactions rather than imposed artificial styles was the common, overriding factor. In the end, it all came down to basic punching and kicking. This was also the case with the Thai kick-boxers except that their style involves more *natural* striking, kicking, feinting, and weaving. Because their methods of training more closely parallel actual fighting, they proved themselves to be more adept under real fighting conditions.